Civil, Military, and Political Cooperation in Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Rebuilding

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On February 1, 2002, the U.S. Army War College and Women in International Security cosponsored a conference at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Participants examined the roles and challenges faced by governmental and nongovernmental agencies and domestic and international organizations in stabilizing and restoring states and societies thrown into turmoil by conflict. Among the more than 100 attendees were representatives from the United Nations and other international organizations, various departments of the U.S. Government, the American armed forces, academia, foundations, and think tanks.

The conference was comprised of four panels, the first of which dealt with establishing security. The second looked at issues involving justice and reconciliation, while the third examined reestablishing the economy and governance, as well as improving social well-being. The closing panel focused on identifying and closing gaps between military and civilian capabilities for these missions, as well as on increasing the overall capacity of the international community to rebuild disrupted states more effectively and more efficiently.

Security.

The widespread consensus among conference participants was that the cornerstone of any rebuilding process had to be adequate security and that was best provided by military forces. Though reluctant to accept peace operations, the U.S. armed forces, and especially the Army, perform these missions very well. Planning for these missions is complex and must aim to achieve local trust and legitimacy. However, current doctrine describes a linear approach from peacemaking to peacekeeping to peacebuilding, failing to recognize that all three may be occurring simultaneously. Also, policymakers must be aware of the signals sent.by the employment of different kinds of military forces and the impact of their presence on the local economy.

Civilian agencies also have an important role to play in achieving security. Reducing crime rates is an essential requirement for stability and progress and that requires a working system of law enforcement. Ideally, intervention forces should deploy not only soldiers, but also a contingent of judges, lawyers, and civilian police. No current organization is configured that way. The United Nations is working diligently to develop aneffective program to build police forces and establish the rule of law in post-conflict areas, but progress in such institution building has been elusive. For any security effort to achieve success, the strong political will of those involved is crucial. Sustainment of such will in the United States requires the support of the Department of Defense with its many

resources and great prestige.

Justice and Reconciliation.

Once order has been reestablished in a society, the next step is to restore the rule of law. The first responsibility has mainly belonged to the military, while the latter has best been achieved with civilian police, lawyers, and judges. This has been a very difficult process, with little recent success transferring control from military to civilian authorities. In Haiti and Somalia, the result was a return to chaos; peacekeeping troops remain in the Balkans to prevent a similar result. Currently there is no systematic way to handle this transition. This might be remedied by establishing an overarching organization based on the FEMA/Stafford Act model to supervise and coordinate such efforts.FEMA, though, has the advantage of working with organizations all from one nation, a situation unlikely to occur in peace operations. One reason it is difficult to execute the transition from military to civilian responsibility in post-conflict rebuilding is because of disproportionate funding and resources. The budgets of government agencies and nongovernmental organizations involved in establishing the rule of law must be enhanced if they are to exercise their roles effectively.

To facilitate healing and help deter future conflicts, it is important to make an historical accounting of past wrongs and to provide justice for the victims. War crime tribunals can be a stabilizing alternative to vengeance, deter future behavior that conflicts with widely accepted international norms, and serve as a vehicle to register the international community's moral indignation. However, the current international system is cumbersome and dysfunctional. Rooted in Western models, current tribunals can be expensive and time-consuming, and might not always be the best solution. Trials tailored to local conditions and utilizing local resources might be a better option, but each situation is unique. Whichever course is adopted, it is imperative that human rights abuses be stopped and punished.

Economic/Social Well-Being and Governance.

As is evident in Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, the failure to reconstitute the rule of law in post-conflict societies has contributed to their inability to sustain systems of governance or maintain the welfare of the populace. Each country has different needs, and this must be taken into account by a systematic planning process that should begin before any international assistance is deployed. The first days and weeks of rebuilding are crucial. From the beginning, relief efforts should promote good governance by supporting commitment to the public good, transparency, accountability, service, local participation, and the rule of law. Decisions must be made about who will be eligible to govern and how they will be selected. Key government functions must be established quickly and maintained,especially in the most visible areas of public utilities, schools, and garbage collection. Local systems which are functioning should not be disrupted.

At the same time, care must be exercised when making demands on fledgling

governments with rudimentary capabilities. International aid resources also have limitations, so such efforts should be well coordinated and concentrate on a small list of critical items to help a country move forward. The international community must also make hard choices about dealing with local power-brokers to set up a post-conflict government, which might entail "pacts with the devil" to maintain stability. There is a tendency to rush elections to facilitate an exit strategy, but this can backfire if societies are not really prepared for them and political institutions have not been established.

Addressing the Gaps.

Recent history is not encouraging about the international community's ability to achieve long-term success in post-conflict rebuilding. The American military, and especially the Army, has been very good at accomplishing its assigned tasks and establishing security. However, the Army is not really structured or resourced to conduct extensive peace operations, is reluctant to accept them as a primary mission, and wants to avoid nation-building responsibilities. Because of this and other factors, moving into later phases of the rebuilding process and transferring authority for them to civilian agencies have been nearly impossible. One solution to this problem might be expanding military responsibilities and accepting nation-building as a national and military mission. However, there is little support for such a course in Congress or in the Pentagon.

Many civilian agencies would be reluctant to see such an expansion of the military's role because of problems with local perceptions, conflicting responsibilities, and different organizational cultures. They agree with the emphasis on initial security that only the military can provide, but see the answer to long-term success in better civil-military communication and coordination, as well as in increasing the capacity of civilian organizations to sustain operations without heavy reliance on the military.

One of the great difficulties in evaluating the progress of post-conflict rebuilding programs is the lack of any appropriate metrics. A set of such standards would also help determine the proper time for the transition from military to civilian control. There is consensus on the goals for post-conflict rehabilitation. It should ensure human security, establish the rule of law, set up a working government, rebuild the economy, motivate local intelligentsia and youth to stay, attract private investment, decrease the possibility of future conflict, build a civil society, and establish border controls. These are long-term objectives, however, that cannot be accomplished with operationswith 1-year mandates. Planning must be more thorough, proactive and nonlinear, with incentive programs to encourage local participation and ownership for the rebuilding processes and the resulting institutions.Events since September 11 have focused the world's attention even more on the necessity to find better ways to resolve conflicts and restore shattered states. While it is almost certain that the international community will be confronted with more opportunities to rebuild post-conflict societies, it is questionable whether the will and resources can be marshaled even to rehabilitate Afghanistan. Capability gaps and resource shortfalls that hinder mission accomplishment are probably here to stay; the most realistic goal may simply be to learn to manage those deficiencies better by

improved planning and coordination.

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